Mistress of the Situation.

BY JENNIE CHAPPELL, AUTHOR OF "BY THE WAY OF THE VALLEY," ETC.

"'Will you please help me downstairs with my box?'" *p.* 66.

CHAPTER IX.

A SORE GOOD-BYE.

"MARY, what do you mean?" I cried. "What has happened? Why do you speak like that?"

"Your sister has insulted me," she replied. "My own self-respect will not allow me to remain in the house of which she is mistress any longer."

"What has she said, then?" I demanded.

"What I do not choose to repeat."

Mary was standing up very straight, taller and more queenly than ever. Her eyes beneath their level brows looked very large and dark, but all the softness had gone out of them, and her mouth was just a hard, colourless line.

I could not bear to see her look like that; I had never seen her angry before.

"Edith is hasty," I said. "She has had a good deal to try her lately, and I daresay it has made her irritable. Wait till to-morrow! Do, Mary dear! Things will look differently to both of you then."

"Unfortunately," returned Mary, with a smile that was worse than her severity, "I have no choice. Miss Alden has been good enough to give me a month's wages and order my departure to-night."

"It's preposterous—cruel!" I exclaimed. "Mary, you shall not do it. I'll ask father about it at once."

I turned towards the door; but a grasp like steel was upon my wrist, and I was forced back, with a power of which I could not have believed those slender fingers capable, to a sitting posture on the side of the bed.

"You will do nothing of the kind!" said Mary, blazing at me with those great dark eyes of hers, as though I had been the offender. "Do you suppose any power on earth would induce me to remain another night under this roof after having been told to *go?*"

"I don't for a moment suppose. Edith really meant it," I said. "And I'm sure father would be very much grieved. Do be good and reasonable, Mary dear!"

I tried to put my arm round her, but she drew herself away. "You are leaving in anger," I said. "You will be sorry for it to-morrow."

"I daresay I shall survive," coolly rejoined Mary. She was all this time hastily packing a number of small articles into a hand-bag.

"What will Keith say when he comes back?"

"I don't know."

"You are cruel! You are most unkind! You think of nothing but yourself and your own annoyance!"

"Very likely," was the icy response.

I was beginning to get angry myself. Those calm, incisive tones were exasperating. What I might have said or done next, I do not know; but at that moment there was a ring at the front-door bell.

"That's the man from the station," said Mary.

"Will you please help me downstairs with my box?"

Courteous as was the tone of this request, it was "she-who-must-be-obeyed" who spoke, and, strange as it may seem, I, without another word of remonstrance, did as I was bid. The smart of my just resentment at her manner towards me no doubt helped me forward.

At the front door Mary held out her hand again, and once more curtly said "Good-bye."

This time I responded with a stiffness equal to her own, and did not offer a kiss.

So she went from us, and I heard the trolley trundling down the street with her belongings as Adelaide's had trundled six months before. Then I came from the door, and, as on that occasion, dropped down upon the lower stairs. Then it was with a feeling of unutterable relief: now I was weak and trembling from a blow.

It had been so sudden and so summary that it left me stunned. I sat in a dazed sort of way at the foot of the stairs in the dark until the silvery chime of the parlour clock gave warning of half-past eight. Then I thought of poor father, and roused myself to light the gas, and went into the kitchen to get supper ready.

While I was thus engaged, Edith came in from the street with the latch-key, and went straight upstairs. I did not know until then that she had been out.

When I took the tray into the parlour, father asked me what I had been doing so long, and whose were the heavy footsteps he had heard in the hall.

"That was a porter from the station," I was obliged to confess. "Mary has gone—left!"

"Gone!" exclaimed father. "Gone for good?"

"Yes, or bad!" I answered bitterly. "Edith dismissed her, it seems, while I was out."

"You ought not to have allowed her to go off in that way at this time of night, my dear!" said father. "It was entirely wrong. Where is she going?"

"I don't know. She would not tell me. I did try to keep her back, father, but it was no use."

"Why did Edith dismiss her?" questioned father. "What was the matter? I can't help thinking it a very rash proceeding. We all liked her so much."

"I have not seen Edith," I replied, dejectedly. "I don't know her version of it. There is no doubt they had a serious quarrel, and Mary, at any rate, was deeply hurt and offended."

"A most unwise proceeding," said father, again. "All hasty actions are. One, or both of them, must have been a good deal in the wrong. I'm sorry, very sorry, my dear!"

He said no more, nor complained that he had not been consulted or in any way acknowledged in the matter. He was of a very gentle disposition, and never attempted to dispute the right of his womankind to reign supreme over all domestic affairs. He however, as Edith showed no signs of appearing at the supper table, told me to go and see after her, and, though unwillingly, I obeyed.

Her room door was shut, and for some time I could get no answer, though slight sounds of movement informed me that she was within.

"Supper is all ready, Edith," I said. "Aren't you coming down?"

"No!" came the reply at last, as from a person suffering from a severe cold in the head. "I don't want any supper."

"But why not? What is the matter? Aren't you well?" I questioned.

"Yes, quite well, thank you. I'm going straight to bed," was the somewhat contradictory response.

I knew, perfectly well, from the sound of her voice, that she had been crying. I also guessed that she had just returned from paying a visit to her convalescent lover. Much as I longed for some explanation of the episode with Mary, I thought it might be kinder to leave my sister to herself just then, and, without teasing her further, I turned away.

Before going downstairs, it occurred to me to run up to Keith's room and see if all was made comfortable for the night. I found everything in perfect order, and in the frame of his little shaving-glass that hung upon the wall was tucked a tiny note, addressed to him in a handwriting which I had never seen before.

This, then, was Mary's farewell to her betrothed. I hoped, still sorely, that it was a trifle kinder than her good-bye to me had been. I remembered a saying of one of my favourite authors that "even a just anger tends to make us unjust and unkind," but it was a decidedly painful experience to have the truth of this exemplified in the behaviour towards myself of her whom I had fondly called my dearest friend. That was, of course, supposing that her anger had indeed been just, but of this I now felt—in consequence, no doubt, of the soreness above mentioned—that I could not be absolutely sure until I had heard Edith's side of the affair.

I went downstairs again. I could not eat a mouthful of supper; I was listening with mingled longing and dread for the sound of Keith's latchkey in the door.

It was nearly eleven before it came; my brother had been to a lecture at the other side of London, but I had waited up. Father, as usual, went to bed about ten. Softly and carefully my thoughtful boy entered the house, imagining, poor dear, that we were all peacefully asleep. Gently he drew chain and bolt, and came tip-toeing into the parlour.

"Hallo, old girl!" was his greeting, "I didn't expect to see you. But what, in the name of all things blue, is the matter with you, child?" he added, pausing and staring at me. "Got the toothache, or seen a ghost?"

"Something has happened, Keith," I said, anxious to get the worst over as soon as possible. "There's a letter for you—a note, I mean—upstairs."

"A note for me, upstairs?" he repeated, bewildered.

"Yes, in your shaving-glass. It's from Mary. I'll run and fetch it."

For about a quarter of a minute he stood as if electrified; but, on my making a move towards the door, he rushed before me, and flew up to his room three stairs at a time.

It seemed an age before he returned, clattering down like an avalanche. He snatched his hat from its peg in the hall, and began unfastening the front door.

"Keith—Keith! Oh, do tell me what she says!" I implored. "Where has she gone?"

"To friends, she says," he answered. "But where *can* she go? She hasn't a friend in London but Mrs. Jonesmith, and she has gone abroad."

"Perhaps she may have other friends, we know so little about her," I said. "Oh, don't go out again to-night, Keith, you'll never find her! It's madness to think of it."

"Madness or no, I'm going," answered my brother. He looked dreadfully white and wild. "Do you think I could rest in this suspense?"

And before I could say another word, he was gone.

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CHAPTER X.

CONDEMNATORY EVIDENCE.

I FELT very desolate as I crept upstairs to the bedroom which my sister and I shared.

Edith lay with her flushed and tear-wet face half-hidden in shadow, and pretended to be asleep. But I did not intend to be deceived by this.

"Keith has gone out again, to look for her," I said. "He seems half beside himself, poor boy!"

I forgot as I spoke that Edith knew nothing of our brother's engagement to Mary.

Edith started, and looked up. "He!" she exclaimed. "He's well set to work, I'm sure! She'll be Mrs. Edric Moore before many days are past, I've no doubt."

It was my turn to exclaim this time.

Edith bounced out of bed with a suddenness that was quite startling, and commenced feeling in the pocket of her gown which hung close by. Her hands were trembling pitifully, and the ring which she had worn night and day for nearly two months was gone!

At last she produced a scrap of crumpled note-paper and half a sheet of blotting-paper.

"Look here, Sissie," she said, with an obvious effort at calmness. "I know you have thought me prejudiced and unsympathetic. I tried to think I was so myself, sometimes. I was sorry, really I was, to have such notions about anybody you liked so much. But just see this! I found it to day, crushed up in the kitchen coal-scuttle."

She held towards me the fragment of writing-paper. On it was written our address, and the date of a day in the previous week, in the same hand that had inscribed the name on that note to Keith—a remarkably firm, square hand, with some heavy cross-strokes in it; and below, defaced by a blot but still plain enough to read, were the words, "*My own darling Edric!*"

I could scarcely believe my eyes.

But as though this were not shock enough, Edith took hold of my arm and drew me towards the looking-glass. In front of it she held up the piece of blotting-paper. There was no need for comment; for, plainly traced on one vacant corner in the same hand-writing, could be seen the inscription—"Edric Moore, Esq.," and decipherable fragments of his address.

I stared, speechless with horror and dismay.

"When I confronted her with these evidences of her deceit—her wicked, scheming, shameless duplicity!" Edith continued, "she flew in an awful passion, and then turned obstinately sulky, refusing even to attempt to defend herself. Do you wonder that I ordered her out of the house on the spot?"

"But Edric," I said. "Surely he could explain?"

"He is as bad as she!" cried my sister, quaveringly. "He evaded me, and prevaricated, and promised that I should be satisfied at some future time, and asked me to wait till to-morrow—as though her black conduct would grow whiter in a night! And when I got angry with him he tried to smooth me down with caresses, like a fractious child! And when I wouldn't be smoothed down, he lost his temper, too, and so—and so—it is all over between us."

There was such unintended pathos in the poor girl's tone as she rather abruptly wound up, that I put my arm round her, and kissed her hot forehead. "I'm *so* sorry, Edie dear," I said. "I'm so very, very sorry that anything should have come between you two."

"But you wouldn't have had me act otherwise, would you?" she argued. And when I paused, wondering how I should express without vexing her my thought that perhaps she might have trusted her lover more firmly, and might even have waited for the explanation which he seemed to have half promised, she added, "It isn't as if this were the first of it, you know. It isn't as if I had not noticed things I didn't quite like before."

"What relations has Edric?" I inquired. "He has no sisters, has he?"

"No," replied Edith, apparently wondering at my seeming irrelevance. "He was an only child. He has no relatives at all, I believe, but some second cousins—elderly bachelors—somewhere in the Midlands."

"Well," I said, "I would give anything to have this wretched tangle made straight. I must admit that you have had great cause for provocation—very great. And it does look indeed, as though you had been, in a way, right, and I wrong, about—about Mary, all along."

Nobody knows what an effort it was to say that! Edith's last reply, though she knew it not, had cut away the ground from beneath a certain rather romantic little castle of possibility in the which, for the last ten minutes, I had been sheltering myself. In my heart I still unreasonably believed in Mary as much as ever; but fairness to my sister and genuine sympathy with her in her great trouble compelled me to admit that appearances were dark against my friend.

"Perhaps she may yet write, and clear everything up," I added. "She surely will if she can."

"I only wish she may!" sighed Edith, wearily. "But I confess I have not much hope."

It was not till nearly one that we heard Keith come in. Then he rushed past our door and up to his own room, evidently not wishing to be intercepted. We heard the key turn in his door, and his boots go off with two savage thuds. I think he must have kicked them across the room. Of course, he had discovered no trace of Mary! How should he? I believe his professed search for her was only an excuse to get out of doors and work off some of his trouble by tramping the street—poor boy! I felt angry with Mary as I thought of him—her farewell to him seemed to have been not much kinder than to me. How *could* she be so unfeeling? I should like to have well shaken her!

My indignation did not lessen as day by day went on and we heard nothing of her. I clung as long as I could to my hope, that when her anger cooled she would realise what pain her behaviour was causing to at least two faithful hearts that had never had a thought but of kindness for her, and either come, or send some message of affectionate regret. But at last I had to give it up.

Mary Ray evidently did not intend us ever to hear of her again. She had come upon us out of space, as it were, like a comet, had lit up our home with a strange, sweet light for five short months, and then disappeared as suddenly and strangely as she had come. There was something mysterious, almost uncanny, about it, I began to think.

Keith must have looked at the matter in much the same way that I did, and found it as difficult—Mary's inexcusable manner of departure and the cloud upon her reputation notwithstanding—to depose her from her place in his heart. Dusting his room one day, I found these lines scrawled on a scrap of paper, and poked into a little vase. I smiled, but with tears in my eyes, as I read them, somewhat comforted to find that his grief could take relief in verse-making :—

"Just to flash across one's path
Like a sunbeam, fair and bright;
To win one's love, to fill one's heart,
And then to fly away and part—
For ever!"

I did not know until afterwards that he went without his dinners in the city for a fortnight, to pay for an advertisement in the "agony column" of a daily paper twice a week!

Meanwhile, the condition of our domestic affairs may be better imagined than described. Edith, who had never attempted housekeeping before in her life, was even less capable of managing than myself. Confusion reigned supreme. We subsisted entirely on tinned salmon, tinned lobster, tinned rabbit, and sardines, with a turn at potted bloater or anchovy for a change. Vegetables, save lettuce and watercress, which required no cooking, we never saw.

But worse than all was the alarming way the money went. Our purse was empty by the Thursday of the first week of Mary's absence, and by the Tuesday night of the second. Before I set out for Mrs. Perry's on the Monday morning of the third week, Edith tearfully confessed she was about to break into her last half-sovereign, and that after about Friday we should have to live on nothing at all!

(*To be concluded.*)

SOME COURTSHIPS BY PROXY.

IF there is one thing more than another in a man's life which he may reasonably be expected to do for himself, and not to entrust to another, surely it is his courtship. In most cases, this, undoubtedly, is exactly what takes place; but occasionally, through diffidence or lack of opportunity, it is found necessary to find a third person who will consent to act as deputy.

Probably the best known instance is that of Miles Standish, a stout old Puritan warrior of the *Mayflower* days. He, it will be remembered, though a widower, and therefore presumably experienced, was too diffident of his powers of persuasion to ask "the damsel Priscilla" to be the second Mrs. Standish.

"I can march up to a fortress and summon the place to surrender,
But march up to a woman with such a proposal, I dare not,
I'm not afraid of bullets nor shot from the mouth of a cannon,
But of a thundering "No!" point-blank from the mouth of a woman—
That, I confess, I'm afraid of, nor am I ashamed to confess it!"

Though John Alden, the young man Miles chose for this rather delicate office, happened to be in love with Priscilla himself, he reluctantly consented to do his friend's errand.

"But as he warmed and glowed, in his simple and eloquent language,
Quite forgetful of self, and full of the praise of his rival,
Archly the maiden smiled, and with eyes overrunning with laughter,
Said, in a tremulous voice, 'Why don't you speak for yourself, John?'"

The result, of course, was inevitable. Priscilla became Mrs. Alden, and Miles Standish remained a widower.

Some forty years ago a number of letters written by James Boswell—Johnson's "Bozzy"—were accidentally discovered in France, and these show him to be even more amusing than he appears in his great biography. One of them addressed to his friend Temple tells how deeply he was in love with a Miss Blair. Would Temple visit the lady, and take notes of her conversation? Some of the instructions extend to this length:—"Praise me for my good qualities—*you know them*; but talk also how odd, how inconstant, how impetuous. Ask gravely, pray don't you imagine there is something of madness in that family? Observe her well. See how amiable! Judge if she would be happy with your friend. Think of me as the great man at Adamtown—quite classical, too! Study the mother. Remember well what passes. Stay tea."

In the next letter we hear of a rival, the discovery of whom in the person of a certain nabob had cooled Boswell's ardour, although in his inamorata he still declares that "every flower is united." Whether Miss Blair married the nabob the letters do not state. She certainly did not become Mrs. Boswell, for that privilege was reserved for a Miss Montgomerie, the lady who, later on, took such a dislike to the "bear," Dr. Johnson.

Neither of these go-betweens appears to have received any fee or reward for his trouble as agent, perhaps because neither was successful.

Mr. Raymond, a famous elocutionist of the early years of this century, was more fortunate. According to her biographer, a great deal of persevering persuasion was found needful to induce Miss Mellon to marry Mr. Coutts, the millionaire, who was then past eighty years of age. The enamoured gentleman employed Mr. Raymond as his advocate, and gave him the handsome fee of one thousand pounds for his trouble.

He managed to draw from the flattered lady a conditional consent, which had been so artfully framed that "at the expiration of a fortnight" the diplomatic Raymond "summoned Miss Mellon to fulfil her promise." Thus it was that she became the second Mrs. Coutts and the mistress of Holly Lodge, Highgate, now the property of the philanthropic Baroness Burdett-Coutts.

CONSOLATION.

"SEE how the glowing ashes
Turn dull and grey and dead!
Though bright the transient flashes,
Drear is the gloom," she said.
"And think how summer's glory,
With all its roses, dies—
Such is my life's brief story,
So my life's summer flies!

"Soon the last flame will perish
And all the hearth be cold,
Soon the last flower I cherish
Fall from my slacken'd hold.
How can there then be left me
On earth a part, a place?
Since death has thus bereft me
Of love, and love's dear grace!"

"Dear," spoke her friend, replying
In tender accents meet;
"Even as summer dying
Has resurrection sweet,
E'en as the flames expiring
Flash into redder glow,
And as the flowers aspiring
Break through the winter snow,—

"So, though life seems to languish,
A holier flame shall start
From the spent fires of anguish,
And thus a nobler part
Be yours—for hope through sorrow
Grows strong, and faith through pain;
And death can only borrow
What it must yield again!"

SHIRLEY WYNNE.

Mother's Girls.—The other day we saw in a newspaper a notice which we think should be read with care, and recognised by the girls as showing a true sphere of Christian effort. Here it is: "Wanted,—In one hundred thousand households, a willing, sunshiny daughter, who will not fret when asked to wipe the dishes, or sigh when requested to take care of the baby; a daughter whose chief delight it is to smooth away a mother's wrinkles, and who is quite as willing to lighten her father's cares as his pocket; a girl who thinks her brother quite as fine a fellow as some other girl's brother. Constant love, high esteem, and a more honoured place in the home guaranteed. Employment assured to all qualified applicants. Address Mother, Home Office."

* * * *

Mutual Affection.—Of all the joys that human nature can feel, none is equal to that which springs from a long-tried and mutual affection. The happiness which arises from genuine love between husband and wife is capable of withstanding the attacks of time, grows vigorous with age, and animates the heart with delight to the end.

RATIONAL DRESS AND ITS PROSPECTS.

BY FLORENCE STACPOOLE, LECTURER TO THE NATIONAL HEALTH SOCIETY.

MANY people associate the idea of *rational dress* with the idea of *trousers, divided skirts, knickerbockers*, shirts, manly ties, etc. This is however, happily, a mistake.

The meaning of the word *rational*, as given in the dictionary, is "agreeable to reason; not absurd or not extravagant; wise; judicious."

Rational dress, then, is (or ought to be) clothing that is reasonable, that is not absurd or extravagant, and that is wise and judicious. Oh, that all the women in England—and everywhere else too—were rationally clothed!

Is the dress of the present day *rational?*

This is one of the questions which must be answered in what seems a very contradictory way. Yes and no.

There is no doubt that many women nowadays *do* dress very rationally. They wear boots with points that do not cramp five moveable toes into a space that seems only made to hold one small stick. They wear corsets that allow them to draw a deep breath, and that give free room for the movement of the *twenty-eight feet* of tubing (remember that the intestines of an adult measure this surprising length) which forms the digestive tract, and which is situated just in that part of the human frame usually encased in stays. They do not hang weighty skirts by a tight band round the waist, and, above all things, they *do not* drag half a yard or so of dress material after them—to act as a street broom—when they take their walks abroad!

These are the things that really constitute *rational* dress, not the silly assumption of the ugly nether garments worn by the other sex, which, as they are for women "absurd," "extravagant" (that is, in the sense of being outrageous), and not "agreeable to reason," can certainly not come under the true definition of the word *rational.*

Fortunately for health, pocket, and convenience, female clothing of the first-mentioned rational type has now become *fashionable* as well.

It is not considered good taste among well-dressed women nowadays to wear the "wasp-waists" of thirty years ago, when officers' swords were sometimes hastily seized in ball-rooms to sever the stay-laces which tightly squeezed some foolish girl till she suddenly dropped unconscious in the midst of the revelry, her heart almost paralysed from the constriction applied around it.

It is not necessary now, in order to "look like everybody else" (which, by the way, seems to be fashion's aim), to buy numbers of yards of silk, or other rich material, to hang on a steel cage depending from the hips.

A fashionable dress can now be made with half, or less than half the quantity of material considered necessary for a costume in the young days of those of us who are now becoming middle-aged.

Above all things, it is decidedly *un*fashionable to wear trailing skirts in the street.

This is perhaps the thing for which we should most of all thank the mysterious and unseen hand which directs the making of "Fashion." And it is this thing which proves very satisfactorily that the women of the present day are much more sensible than those of the last generation.

It used at one time to be considered a mark of high fashion to enact the part of a street sweeper, and polish the pavement with the tail of a silk gown. Now it is considered exactly the reverse, and fashionable ladies are wearing their walking dresses only just long enough to cover their ankles.

If people knew the absolute danger to health, and even to *life*, of the wretched habit of wearing sweeping skirts in the streets, they would surely relinquish the habit.

The danger is two-fold.

1. In damp weather, which we have so much of in this changeable climate, a dress that rests upon the ground will certainly be very often wet all round the edge which rests upon the boots.

Now, there is hardly anything that is more certain to cause all sorts of ill health than *damp feet.* Toothache, neuralgia, rheumatism (which very often leads to heart disease, a frequent follower on an attack of rheumatic fever), diarrhœa, colds and coughs (which often are the precursors of consumption), besides a variety of *internal complaints*, can all spring merely from wet feet. Surely such a list ought to be enough to frighten anyone from the folly of walking about in a skirt that is long enough to suck up the moisture from the ground on which it trails!

It is pitiable to see women who have to go out to their various occupations in all sorts of bad weather, and who perhaps have only a couple of dresses belonging to them, hurrying along with their skirts clinging like a wet sop round their broken boots. Whenever I see such carelessness it makes me sad to think of what they must suffer, sooner or later, as the inevitable consequence of their total disregard of the laws of health and common sense.

Now, there is a very simple means by which a long skirt may be securely fastened up under a waterproof cloak, to be let down on reaching one's destination. Take either a leather strap, such as a narrow rug strap, or if this is not at hand, a piece of cord or stout tape, and strap or tie it loosely round the waist, draw the skirt up through this till it is well off the ground, and with two or three pins fix it securely. It will be quite impossible then for it to shake down in any part, as it may easily do if merely pinned without the support of the strap or cord.

2. The second danger from the wearing of sweeping skirts is one which does not strike the generality of people, simply because they have never studied the subject of the causes of infectious diseases. What connection there can be between long dresses and measles or scarlatina they would be quite at a loss to guess. Nevertheless, there may be, quite possibly, a very intimate connection, *because* all the infectious diseases are caused by, and can only come from, a minute, invisible, but *living seed.* This seed may be

wafted in the air, or scattered on the ground just as the seed of grass may be (of course, it is not the same *kind* of seed as that of grass; this is only mentioned as an illustration), and if it comes in contact with soil in which it can grow, as a body in a state of susceptibility for the reception of disease germs, it will spring up and produce its harvest, which takes the shape of an attack of disease of an infectious kind.

It is important to remember that the vitality or living power of these disease germs lasts much longer than the disease itself. This is especially true of scarlatina. In this disease the seed exists in the smallest particle of the skin, which, as everyone knows, peels off the body during the patient's recovery. It sometimes takes many days before this fine, loose skin is entirely shed from the body, and although during this time the patient *ought* to remain indoors, as a matter of fact, he often does not do so. Boys are frequently playing in the street during convalescence, and, all unknowingly, are very likely scattering the seeds of disease, and perhaps death, all around them.

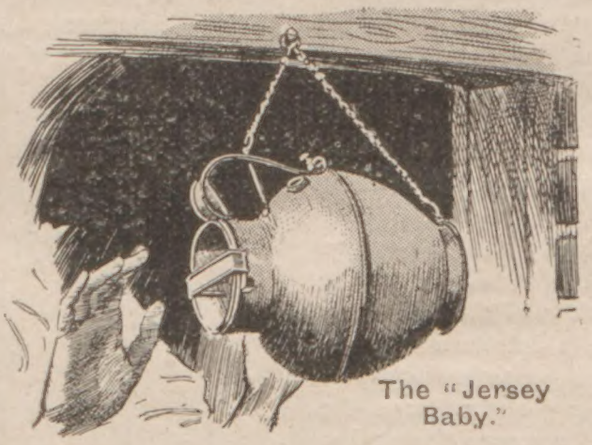
Now, these seeds may very easily be taken up on a long, trailing skirt and brought home. This is a very uncomfortable idea, no doubt, but nevertheless it is true; and I hope that if any reader of these pages is in the habit of sweeping the pavement with her skirts, she will be made uncomfortable enough by reading these remarks to leave off the practice. If we could cut off the tail of the gown that has been wiping the pavement every time we come in from a walk and throw it into the dust-bin, it would not perhaps matter so much, though even then we should not get rid of the dust we had raised by it, and which must cling to the nether garments. But we cannot do this; we must take the dress and all the impurities it has gathered, and bring it into our bedroom, and hang it up in our wardrobe or press! How can anyone who values personal cleanliness, which truly is next to godliness, do so unclean a thing?

I am persuaded that it is only from absolute thoughtlessness that such things are done. I have directed attention to a real danger which lies in the long skirt when worn out of doors, and I trust that those who have not before thought of this aspect of the matter, will do so now, and cut off one of the means by which infectious disease is spread.

NOVEL NOTIONS.

A HANGING CHURN.

THOSE of our readers who are interested in dairy matters will be pleased with the sketch of a little churn for home use which we here give. It is called the "Jersey Baby," and consists of a Jersey milk-jug, fitted with a view-glass, and made air-tight by a simple arrangement of the lid. The churn is suspended from a nail or hook, as shown, and the operator swings it to and fro through a range of several inches. Although the churn has no internal beaters or dashers, the butter comes in five or ten minutes. It is affirmed that it can make as many as five pounds of butter at a time; but, of course, it is not intended for a large yield.



The "Jersey Baby."

AIR-TIGHT COVERS.

Some new covers for domestic use have recently been patented under the name of the "Limpet." They are made of fine india-rubber, and stretched over a round metal frame. Their action is very simple in use, all that is needed being to moisten the rim of the basin, glass, or cup which it is desired to protect, and to slightly depress with the hand the rubber of the cover when putting it in position. When the hand is withdrawn the rubber returns to its original shape, and thus a partial vacuum is made, and the vessel thoroughly sealed. By depressing the rubber it may be easily removed, and the contents of the vessel exposed for obtaining what is required. Not only for general household use, in preserving various stores, liquid or solid, but for keeping the air from medicines and lotions in the sick-room, these covers are useful and handy.

AN IMPROVED CHIMNEY-POT.

What can be more annoying than a smoky chimney? To cure the nuisance we are offered the duplex chimney-pot. It is simple in construction, and has no revolving parts to get out of order. It consists of a galvanised iron cylinder about five feet long or more, tapering towards the top, where it opens out in a basin-shaped mouth, the sides of which incline in such a manner that the wind is deflected upwards instead of downwards into the chimney. The wall of the shaft is doubled, and tends to improve the up-draught by keeping the ascending smoke and air warm. The shaft, moreover, offers no internal obstacle to the sweeper's broom, and has a neat appearance.

SCENTED FISH.

Every cook is aware of the peculiar flavours, apart from their natural ones, to be sometimes met with in meat and fish. Thus pork is often "fishy" to the taste, and certain shell-fish are "coppery." Another instance of this "flavouring" is just made known. In the vicinity of Geneva there is a scent manufactory, and into the river Rhone the waste products of musk are discharged. As a consequence, it is found that trout and other fish in the neighbourhood have a musky savour; but whether, like some other fishes, they eat the waste products, or simply become impregnated with the perfume, has not yet been ascertained.

*** Readers wishing for further information about these Novel Notions are invited to write to the Editor at 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C., enclosing a stamped envelope for reply.

A Peep in the Day Nursery.

A VISIT TO BABIES' CASTLE.

BY GLADYS FENTON, AUTHOR OF "CRADLE SONGS AND LULLABIES," ETC.

IF there be one pardonable weakness to which I must plead guilty, it is a love of universal babyhood. With me, the mere sight of a tender babe at once unseals the springs of affection, the helplessness of infancy appealing to me as nothing else can. But I need not stay to discuss with mothers the supremacy of maternal love; I simply mention the matter by way of preface to a brief account of a recent visit to Babies' Castle, which proved to me as entertaining as I hope an account of it may prove to my readers.

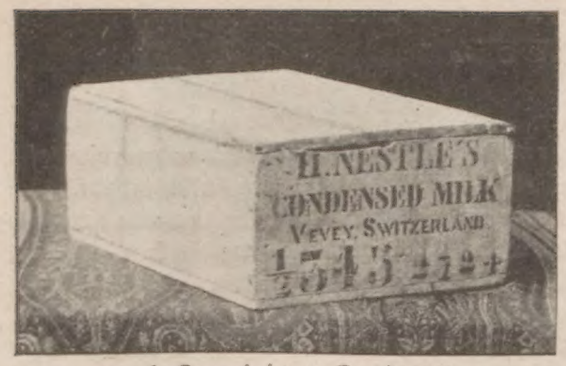
Let me say at once that Babies' Castle is the home in which that friend of outcast childhood, Dr. Barnardo, cares for the neglected infants whom he is able to rescue. The building is at Hawkhurst, in Kent. It is a fine red-brick structure, about which the ivy clings in picturesque fashion. Situated in the heart of healthy country and surrounded by wide fields, the place is an ideal abode for the starved, forsaken mites taken from the streets and slums of our great cities.

And this work of rescue is indeed a thrilling story. One can scarcely imagine the condition of infant life amongst the vagrant and beggar class of the land. For instance, in some parts of London a baby can be hired at from fourpence to a shilling a day for begging purposes! "I myself have, in days gone by," says the Doctor, "bought children in order to rescue them; but my children have, for the most part, been obtained by legitimate means."

Very strangely at times the little ones come to the home. One of the most remarkable instances was that of little Frank. Few children reach Dr. Barnardo whose antecedents cannot be traced and their history recorded in the volumes kept for that purpose. But Frankie remains one of the unknown. Some time ago a carrier delivered what was presumably a box of Swiss milk at the Homes. The porter in charge received it, and was about to place it amongst other packages, when the faintest possible cry escaped through the cracks in the lid. The pliers were hastily brought, the nails flew out, the lid came off, and there lay little Frank in his diminutive baby's robe, peacefully sleeping, with the end of the tube communicating with his bottle of milk still between his lips!

Sometimes the little one is deserted by its parents, and a kind-hearted woman steps in to plead for its adoption at the Castle. Four years ago a tiny fellow was discovered destitute upon a door-step in Oxford. He was taken to the workhouse, and after investigation to discover the people who abandoned him, he came into the Doctor's hands. He had no name, but he was forthwith christened, and given the name of a celebrated building standing close to where he was found! Every possible means are used to trace these tiny outcasts when first received at the headquarters at Stepney Causeway in London, before being passed on to Hawkhurst. A photo is taken of every child when it arrives —even in tatters; and it is re-photographed when it is washed and properly dressed. Many thousand nega-

The Secretary with "Midget" and "Prince."



A Suspicious Package.

tives have been taken, and the photograph of a child can be turned up at a moment's notice for indentification.

It was dinner-time when I arrived at and entered Babies' Castle, and at once I had an opportunity of inspecting the various rooms and their occupants. The little ones who could walk were toddling along the corridor very prettily. I was deeply touched at the sight of one pair—a little girl who was a blind idiot, and a youngster who was also blind. Some of the others were laughing and chatting as they went, while a dozen of the very smallest were crawling along sturdily. Of course, I went into the dining-room, and quite a picture the little ones made as they sat at the long tables covered with white cloths. Their meat-soup seemed very savoury; and the diners, as clean as new pins, looked as unlike the typical dirty, neglected children of the "slum" as could well be imagined.

A Surprising Disclosure.

After dinner comes the mid-day sleep of two hours for the babies proper. I took a peep into the sleeping-room where the mites lay dozing. Each had a little cot, beneath which lay the pair of shoes belonging to the drowsy owner. All was neatness itself.

From these rooms we went upstairs—under the guidance of the Deputation Secretary, the Rev. W. J. Mayers—to the nursery. Here are the tiniest of the inmates. Some of the occupants of the white enamel cribs are only a very few weeks old. A little later a batch of these cherubs were carried to the garden, where they could sit in their chairs in the sunshine and enjoy a quiet pull at their respective bottles. And splendid appetites they have! Eighteen gallons of milk are consumed every day at Babies' Castle, from sixty to seventy bottles filled per diem, and all the bottle babies are weighed every week and their record carefully kept.

My next step was bent towards the school-room. Here the dear little ones were seated on small forms, listening to a simple story from their teacher. Then how they did sing! Really, the lessons were so entertaining that the instruction given seemed more like play, especially when one looked at the happy young faces.

Presently school was over, and then out into the play-field the toddlers marched. Never shall I forget the innocent playfulness of them. There was the Castle perambulator, in which two darlings were placed, and several older ones were allowed to assist in wheeling it about the grounds. Another vehicle was the babies' brougham, drawn by a most respectable Neddy, while a maid or two took charge of the little occupants during their healthful airing. Other of the youngsters made for the swing-boats, and cramming it with their small persons, shouted with delight as they found themselves being carried up and down in see-saw fashion. One robust fellow obtained possession of a fair-sized rocking-horse, and was amusing himself right heartily. The rest of the party contented themselves with a healthy run and the simple diversions of childhood.

To my regret, I found that it was now time to terminate my visit. However, I had had a good peep through the Castle, and all the arrangements seemed to be the result of much practical wisdom and foresight. I turned to say good-bye. Opposite was the gate enclosing the play-field, and at it were a group of little ones. Quite a study they made, and as I looked at them, and contrasted their dainty, happy state with the degradation from which they had been rescued, very deep was my thankfulness for such a noble institution as Babies' Castle.

The Castle at Hawkhurst.

HOW TO LOOK BEAUTIFUL.

BY BERTHA SANSOM.

IT is the eye shining in perfect lustre, the cheek untarnished by dissipation or care, and the face always beaming with an expression of benevolence, that create attractive beauty; and these are all influenced by the mind. Undoubtedly, as life progresses, and the muscles become firmly fixed, the expression cannot be permanently altered; but in youth and maidenhood they can be so habitually used as to make the expression what the mind desires. The sullen girl, with pouting lips, will grow up with that mark of ugliness upon her. The child always happy, never allowed to speak sharply or angrily, but encouraged to think of making others happy, and to be active in waiting on those around him, will grow up with a smile. The child early taught to carry gifts to its poorer neighbours, who is early initiated into the great blessing of self-sacrifice for another without hope of present reward, whose example is purity, and its precept love, will become a benevolent person, with an expression attracting the confiding youth, as well as the old and experienced.

Disease, sorrow, anxiety, and a feverish fretfulness of constitution will influence the mind, and through it the expression. At first sight it would appear that these must inevitably affect the expression the same way. It is not so. Disease is most powerful in running its scientific course, and producing definite effects; but he who has realised that these pains are all the result of imprudence will allow them to affect the mind, and will be led away by vicious companions, and have an expression of suffering, mingled with contempt and self-abasement—far different from the faithful woman, who knows that they are not incubated by any fault or error of her own, and whose mind is trained in love and trust upon the Eternal.

Bereavement, also, is a great factor to influence the expression. When one we love more than our own existence is snatched away at the moment of our most intense enjoyment, just when the loved one appears to be our greatest comfort and happiness, the mind is prone to settle down in a morbid, diseased state of melancholy, and the expression to become cold, haughty, and scornful. But there are those who can rise triumphant over sorrow, and, by the judicious exercise of faith and hope, still wear an expression subdued indeed by trial, but calm and bright, which wins the admiration of all. The mind has influenced the expression.

Peace of mind is another great factor affecting the expression, and causing it to shed a lustre of brightness and joy over all, which tends to elevate or to soothe the path of the sad, the erring, and the sorrowful, inspiring them to acts of trust and confidence which a sour person completely annihilates. It requires very little skill in psychology to be enabled to rightly enumerate in what manner a man has been trained by the expression he bears. A lady, educated as a lady, with all the feelings and aspirations of one, will always by her expression inspire holier and better feelings than one who has been allowed to indulge in sarcasm, uncharitableness, and conceit. Undoubtedly, the employments of life affect the expression equally as much as the mind's education. The stern martinet must always destroy the beauty of expression by his stern, commanding look. Those who would have a nice, bright expression must have purity of thought and employment. A person who is ill-tempered, unjust and mercenary, can never have a face of grace and beauty.

Further, if we examine the influence of good temper upon the personal beauty of its possessor, we shall find that it is no slight or unimportant factor, indeed, that it is far more potent than the aid of mere dress. Compare the good-tempered and the ill-tempered woman in their personality. The one is calm, happy, and peaceful, the other restless, discontented, and ill at ease—conditions of mind that powerfully affect the expression of the face. One attracts by her sweetness and sympathy! the other repels by her angry spirit and her ill-natured or sarcastic words. Bishop Wilson once said, "Good temper is nine-tenths of Christianity," and when we remember the many lovely qualities of mind and beauties of expression which follow in its train, and that cannot exist without it, we shall not consider the statement an extreme one.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the mind and heart not only elevate man in his natural intercourse with his fellow-creatures, but also help to form the beauty of expression and loveliness.

Helps for Busy Housewives.

BEDS, when occupied, should not be placed with one side close to a wall. In this position the sleeper's breath is thrown back and inhaled again—a most pernicious practice. Another objection is to be found in possible dampness from the walls. Let there be a free circulation of air all round the bed, especially if there are two occupants.

To Clean Jewellery.—One teaspoonful of ammonia to a teacupful of water. Apply with a soft rag, and polish with leather.

Red Noses.—Of all the minor ills that flesh is heir to, perhaps a nose of too rosy a hue ranks as the unsightliest. But if it be not complicated with other evils it need not be endured, for it can be cured. Tight clothes are a constant source of red noses. Stays that pinch or press—it need not necessarily be the waist—garters, ill-fitting boots, or other articles of clothing that impede the circulation of the blood, are in many instances the causes of unbecoming redness of the nose. Of course, none of these defects may exist, but if they do, nothing will ever reduce the redness while they remain.

Rice Pudding for an Invalid.—Simmer two tablespoonfuls of rice in a pint and a half of milk till the rice is quite soft. Add one or two well-beaten eggs, and sugar to taste, and bake in a moderate oven till it is set. This pudding should prove both nice and nourishing.

Good Digestion.—Avoid highly-seasoned dishes and unwholesome dainties, and whatever has proved hurtful to the system. Food should be apportioned to the amount of exercise a person takes. Most people eat too much, and consequently suffer from indigestion. Never eat anything between regular meals. Eat that which is most wholesome, and custom will render it the most delightful.

WOMEN OF WORTH.

MRS. BRYSON AND HER WORK IN CHINA.

BY ISABEL SUART ROBSON, AUTHOR OF "THE MOTHER OF GARFIELD," ETC.

MANY years ago a little girl used to sit dreaming over the quaint picture on a willow-pattern plate, puzzling out the story of the three Celestials running over the rustic bridge, the queer little boat with its one sailor, and the two doves, in mid-air, surveying the scene; she was far from guessing that she would ever visit the "Middle Kingdom," or be a force for good among its strange inhabitants. That child was Mary Isabella Carruthers, and, just as in childhood she studied the willow-pattern plate for its human interest, so, in maidenhood, humanity and its truest welfare engrossed her best thoughts. The atmosphere of her home was one to stimulate such a tendency. Her parents were Christians of a noble type. For more than thirty years her father, Mr. George Carruthers, has been closely connected with the Bunyan Meeting, Bedford, and its Sunday-school was the scene of Miss Carruthers' first Christian work. There she laboured happily until her marrage, in 1875, with the Rev. Thomas Bryson. With him she sailed for China, a country which had never lost its early attraction for her.

Photo by] Mrs. Bryson. *[E. Walker and Co., Bedford.*

The China of actuality was in every way different from the vision called up by her childish dreamings, and especially was Mrs. Bryson's warm and sympathetic nature drawn to the ignorant women, the small-footed girls, and little pig-tailed boys. She soon learnt their language, and endeavoured to win their confidence—the first step towards helping them spiritually. "It was no easy task," she says. "The Chinese seem to spend their lives from the cradle to the grave in constant fear of unseen or imaginary enemies." There was no knowing what this "foreign evil spirit" might not meditate if she once got them around her on the green slopes of their city wall! Mrs. Bryson was patient and persevering; she has always believed the hope for China is in the rising generation, and how well she has studied this side of the work, may be gathered from her graphic volume on "Child-Life in Chinese Homes."

Disappointments and hardships have been an inevitable part of her missionary career; journeys with her husband to cities where no foreign lady had been before; spring and autumn itinerary tours to towns which had no settled pastor, travelling leisurely up the broad Yang-tze-Kiang in small native boats, and often undergoing some rough experiences. When Mr. Bryson landed to preach or distribute Christian books, crowds of women and children would come to look at the foreign lady, mustering courage sometimes to creep on deck, and crouch down near her, to hear what she had to tell them. The fruits of her observation and experience Mrs. Bryson has contributed to various missionary periodicals, and also to those of the Religious Tract Society. She had, for several years before her marriage, written for current magazines under the name of "Isa Kar"; in China, she found many a story to which she longed to attract the sympathetic attention of her countrymen. She has also written a biography of Dr. Mackenzie, who worked with Mr. Bryson in Wuchang, having charge of the medical mission, and of a special hospital, supported by the princely generosity of the Viceroy Li-Hung-Chang. Her biography of "Fred. C. Roberts," just published, tells very sympathetically the story of their work together in Tientsin, and brings before us vividly the lights and shadows of missionary life in a great Chinese city—its joys and sorrows, its trials and difficulties.

In 1883 Mrs. Bryson's health failed, and she was compelled to come to England to recruit, only to learn that the physician forbade her return to the scene of her first labours. An appointment was found in Tientsin, and thither she and her husband sailed in 1885. They have since visited England for rest and change, having laboured during nine years with such enthusiasm and encouraging success, that few wonder at their eagerness to return. "I have spent so many years in China," Mrs. Bryson cheerily writes "it seems as

much 'my ain countree' as the shores of old England."

Her activity surprises many. While in the full routine of missionary life, wielding a fruitful pen, she has borne the care and anxiety of a large family, which has, naturally, not been exempt from the ills that beset young life in China. "How has she managed it all?" someone once asked. "Surely it seems beyond one woman's capacity and strength!" No truer answer can be given to such a question than the lines penned by one who also worked under difficulties :

"I look up to my Father, and know I shall be heard,
And ask Him for the glowing thought, and for the fitting word,
I look up to my Father, for I cannot work alone,
'Tis sweeter far to seek His strength than lean upon my own."

HER POEM.

IN her woman's heart was a poem,
A grand and tender song,
A word of hope to the weary,
A stern rebuke to the wrong;
It often pleaded for utterance,
For voice to reach the world,
To be raised where all might heed it,
A banner of love unfurled.

But she never found the moment,
With days so full of care,
To breathe out the burning heart words
Of her poem nestling there;
There were always household duties,
Dull rounds for every day,
And just before her, step by step,
Some task all unfinished lay.

Her children grew up and blessed her,
And honoured her sainted name;
She had guarded their childish footsteps,
But had missed the road to fame;
From the many snares and pitfalls
Along their youthful way
Her watchful care had saved them,
Not one had wandered astray.

The good angel wrote down her life-work,
A pure and shining page,
More sweet than dreams of a poet,
More grand than seer or sage;
She had met each homely duty,
Nor striven for earth's renown;
Her life was a poem of beauty;
Her reward, in Heaven, a crown.

ALMA HAYDEN.

GOSSIPING BEFORE CHILDREN.

IT is astonishing how thoughtless mothers often are of their manner of speech before children. Children are very attentive listeners. They may seem to be interested in their play or their books, but, nevertheless, nothing said by their elders escapes their ears. Children like to hear what their elders are talking about, especially if the talk is carried on with a show of mystery.

Friends may speak depreciatingly of some other friend without a thought of the consequences, and perhaps without even a remembrance of their words a few days afterwards, but the child who hears them makes a memorandum of the sins of commission or of omission which mother and her friend talked over, and thus an unjust prejudice is acquired, which mother is astonished to hear expressed perhaps weeks later. "What mother says must be so," is the argument a child uses to reason out the wrong and right of things. Mother is the ideal of all that is true and just.

Think of this, mothers. What wonderful trust your little child places in you and your judgment and actions! Is it not a very serious matter to be a child's ideal of what is best and truest in motherhood? "Mrs. So-and-so must be a dreadful woman," reasons the child who has heard a neighbour spoken of in a deprecatory manner. And if that neighbour has a child, what a show of superior goodness the child of the gossiping mother carries about with her hereafter when she mingles with "Mrs. So-and-so's" child! How pitifully she regards her in the light of her mother's depreciating estimate! It is such a dreadful thing to have a parent who does things which mother thinks are so bad!

We want our children to acquire habits of truth and justice that will help them on in right living, but are we particular to teach them not to speak untruthfully or unjustly of their little playmates? When they come to us with a story which depreciates the good qualities of some little friend, do we counsel them not to repeat anything which will impair the reputation of that child? Do we help them to acquire that charity which thinketh no evil of one's neighbour?

A lady was taking dinner at a friend's house one day. Inquiries were made of mutual friends of former days, when the lady told, or began to tell, a story of one of them which was detrimental to that person's reputation. The children at the table became interested in the recital; it was something quite novel to them to hear any one discussed in this way. But the father adroitly turned the tide of conversation, and when the elders of the family were alone, he apologised for the abrupt ending of the conversation by saying: "I make it a point never to say anything that is likely to injure any one in the estimation of my children. I am afraid they will become unduly prejudiced, as I was in my young days, against persons who were really worthy of my highest regard, because of the foolish talk of people who thought that a child would not pay much heed to the conversation going on about him."

A good rule for every father and mother to establish in the household is this: Never to allow any gossip to find a hearing or a telling in the home. Being careful at home in the presence of our own family to banish all pernicious gossip will keep us from indulging in like conversation outside the home circle.

SUSAN TEALL PERRY.

MRS. AYLMER'S DENIAL.

BY M. B. MANWELL, AUTHOR OF "NOBLY PLANNED," ETC., ETC.

"SHE'S remarkably pretty!" said one.

"And remarkably well-dressed!" added another.

"And remarkably amiable!" put in a third.

So they piled on praise and criticism when Raymond Aylmer brought his bride home to Norton Friars, the village being on tip-toe with excitement over the event. We had known Ray since his perambulator days. He was old Dr. Aylmer's son, and who so fit to tread in his father's footsteps, and, finally, step into his shoes as medical adviser to Norton Friars? Some of us, perhaps, thought Ray might have sought—and found—a wife nearer home. However that might be, we made no difference in our welcome to young Mrs. Aylmer, though she and her belongings were strangers to us. It was vaguely said she came from the north. Ray himself told us that she was governess in a noble Scotch family.

After the first Sunday, when the bridal pair appeared at church, we all hastened to call at the doctor's house, everybody being gratified by the bride's gentle manners and pleasant reception of her visitors in her pretty, old-fashioned home.

"Mrs. Aylmer puzzles me, though," said Ray's great chum, Will Beamish, the land agent at The Hall, Sir John Norton's estate. "Every feature in her face seems so familiar. I surely have met her somewhere!" Then Will resolved to find out for himself.

"I must have seen you before, Mrs. Aylmer?" he said, regarding her intently, one day when the doctor's young wife had strolled to the gate with him. "Were you never in Norton Friars?"

Letty Aylmer started, and involuntarily raised the flowers she carelessly carried to shield her paling cheek from the keen scrutiny of Will's eyes. She made a fair picture in her summery gown and pretty sun-hat, her white hand drooping over the gate.

But Will was not admiring her; he was waiting for his curiosity to be satisfied.

"I was never in Norton Friars. I know absolutely nothing of it or its people." The words came at last, in dropping syllables from whitening lips.

"She couldn't—surely she couldn't be telling a falsehood!" muttered Will, after he had taken his leave and was striding home over the wide moorland beyond the village. "But it's queer, very. More than that, she made a slip once or twice with the old names and places. I wish it may be all square, for dear old Ray's sake—she's just all the world to him!"

They were "just all the world" to each other, Ray and his wife. Letty loved her husband passionately. Little wonder, for our young doctor was a man of men. His large heart was brimful of pity for the suffering and the sinning alike.

"What is sin itself," he would ask, "but a disease of the soul, which it takes God Himself to alleviate? For disease of the body, I'll do my best by patting nature on the back. But the other—ah! that's for Higher skill."

"'I must have seen you before, Mrs. Aylmer?' he said.

A year ago Ray and Letty first met accidentally, during the former's holiday in Scotland. The wooing that sprang up had been a long time "a-doing," the delay being all on Letty's side strangely enough, seeing how great was her love for Ray. At last he won her, and brought home his bride. But somehow, as time went on, Mrs. Aylmer seemed no nearer to us. For one thing, she rarely came out. To see her we had to seek her. It disappointed us no little that she showed such persistent reserve. Ray himself grew vexed by her dislike to go out and about.

"Ray dear, it's all so sweet, the home you've given me; it's so wonderful to be mistress of it all. It more than suffices. And, besides, there's always you!" She clung timidly to him, and Ray forgot to chide.

"Letty!" Ray said shortly after, "there's one place I should like you to go to—that's the almshouses. One of the dear old women, Widow Lane, a crony of mine, is dying. You might take her flowers and fruit, or dainties. And, dear, lead her on to talk; she's a painfully reticent woman, and there must be a great deal pent up. It would be a relief, poor soul."

There was a pause of hesitation. Then Letty promised slowly, as if with difficulty. But when Ray departed on his rounds, she threw herself face downwards, sobbing violently. "Dying! dying, he said! Oh, Ray, my husband, what *you* have cost me!"

Day after day, Letty Aylmer went to and fro to the quaint almshouses on the green, and we knew it was to see poor old Widow Lane who lay a-dying.

"Mrs. Aylmer can come out when it suits her fancy!" we said with a bitterness that would have died away could we have looked through the latticed window upon a strange scene.

"Mother, mother! Will *you* tell him?" sobbed the woman kneeling on the floor.

"No, Letty, never!" stolidly murmured the woman lying on the bed. "Why should I injure you, child?"

"But, mother, how small it all seems now!"

"You mean when death knocks at the door?" quickly said Widow Lane. Then, stroking the bowed head, she whispered, "Never fear, Letty, and some day you may know yourself what a mother's love means. Then you will understand how I've been able to hold my tongue!"

It was as if a sudden sword smote Letty's heart. A veil had fallen from her eyes.

"Mother!" she cried, springing up, "'I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.' I have denied you! But, God give me strength, and I'll tell all Norton Friars that I'm your child and father's, Lane the keeper at Sir John's, even if it cost me—Ray!" The last word died away in a strangled sob, and Letty would have fallen but for a pair of strong arms that caught her.

"My Letty! I've heard it all!" What was the young doctor saying as he held Letty tighter? The two women who had kept their secret so well gazed bewildered. "Dear! what matters it whose daughter you were, seeing you're my wife!" What did it mean? Had God forgiven her sin? Letty wildly asked. But at a feeble cry, the husband and wife knelt beside the bed, hushing their agitation in the presence of death.

"It was the only cloud between my God and me, Letty, lass. Now it has passed, and I may go." The tired eyelids closed, and Widow Lane slept for all time.

* * * * *

It was long before Mrs. Aylmer came out among us again, and to this day she is timid and retiring, but brave withal; for she persistently speaks of her father and mother who worked hard to give their child a superior education, and then—lost her.

"It's all I can do," she says, meekly, to her husband, who knows she sinned to win himself.

"As though I should have cared a rap!" he declares, radiantly proud of his wife.

"I always thought Mrs. Aylmer and I had met before," gravely says Will Beamish—who is still a bachelor.

MOTHERS IN COUNCIL.

CONDUCTED BY MRS. E. M. WATERWORTH, AUTHOR OF "MOTHERS AT HOME," ETC.

May 1st, 1896.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—I have had a batch of rather sad letters this time. What a lot of clouds there seem to be hanging over most of us! Clouds of our own making, maybe, and yet their shadows are none the easier to bear. Clouds caused by other people who say they love us, and yet all the time they are doing their best (unconsciously, let us hope) to block out every ray of sunshine. Ah, we all know those clouds, don't we? and perhaps they are the blackest and thickest of any. Clouds again sent direct from God, which settle around our whole life, and would shut out all glimpses of heaven, if He did not whisper to our souls in the darkness, "It is I." Oh, yes, we all have our clouds, and happiest are those amongst us who have fallen into the hands of God, instead of into those of our fellow-men. David knew what he was about when he made his choice of a punishment.

Well, what can I say to you, to myself, to all who are struggling through the darkness? Just this—Don't waste your strength in vain regrets; don't add to the misery of the present by raking up the past. We all do it, I know, but it's a fatal mistake. How can we gain courage for the what-is-to-be if we are fretting over the what-might-have-been? Let us fight bravely on through the clouds; we shall not be amongst them one second longer when our work is finished, and for all our fighting we cannot get out of them till it is finished. The first words we ever hear of God speaking are, I think, among the most prophetic and the most beautiful, "Let there be light." What a glorious relief to most of us when we realise that we have entered into the last shadow of all and that He is still at hand to say those words to us once more!

* * * *

I am glad, "M. B. S.," that any words from me may have saved your opening a correspondence with any advertising brokers. The people I recommend to you

are clever and trustworthy, and will do your business carefully. Of course, I could not give you the name of the man who swindled my friend. Would you like to see me acting the part of defendant in a libel case? I'm sure you would not; so, like the parrot, I'll say less and think the more.

* * * *

"What shall I do with my boys in the evening?" asks a "MOTHER," and I wish a good many others would follow her example. Do you know, I think that boys as a whole are far too much scolded, and far too little considered. Just because they are boys it is taken for granted that they must be untidy, noisy and careless, and in many houses it is an unwritten law that anything will do for the boys. The result naturally is, that these boys grow up into all that careless mothers think them, and as soon as they are old enough, leave their homes with a sigh of relief. Nor is that all; in nine cases out of ten they develop into disagreeable men.

Now, as I have three boys of my own, I suppose I may be allowed to speak very plainly. I fail to see why a boy should slam the door, or make himself generally unpleasant, any more than a girl should. Why should a girl be provided with useful and pleasant amusements, and a boy be left to hang about with his hands in his pockets? Carpentering, fretwork, wood-carving, painting, free-hand drawing, knitting, netting, wool-work—they are all within reach of a boy, and may prove very useful to him when he is a man in lodgings, without a mother or wife. If we all made our homes brighter for our boys, we should have fewer broken hearts among parents.

* * * *

Poor, dear "DEVONSHIRE MATRON," your letter tells its own story, though to people who know less about the seamy side of life it might seem to say very little. But, my dear friend, do trust me more. If you had given me your address, with just a hint to be careful, I could have told you what you want to know in a few hours. As it is, I fear me you have been thinking that for all my promises to help I am much like the rest of the world—good at promising, and poor at performing. Nevertheless, I have not been unmindful of you, and hope, now you have lifted the corner of your burden and let me take hold of it, you will have courage to let me help you a big bit more. My discretion and secrecy you can always rely upon. After all, what are we sent into this world for, if it be not to help others and ourselves to work our way bravely through its tangled forests of trouble or pain?

An annuity of £7 can be purchased by a woman under thirty-five years of age through the Post Office authorities for a lump sum of £149 3s. 2d.; at least, that is what I gather from the cover of the Savings Bank book, but if you inquire at the nearest Post Office they will tell you all particulars. Let me hear from you again.

Yes; haddock is a very nice thing for breakfast, but a good deal depends on the way it is cooked. From a long and varied experience of people who call themselves "cooks," I have come to the conclusion that they beat any other set in the placid way in which they persist in putting any numbers together but the right ones, and calmly expect them to make *four*. First buy your haddock, "A. B. C." Then get the man to skin it for you. Put it in a tin with just a little water under it, and two or three scraps of butter over it. Pop it in the oven, and the moment you see the water turning milky, dish it up, eat it, and—bless M. C.!

* * * *

"S. E. G." has sent me a recipe for keeping the hands nice, which sounds as if it were first-rate. Mix well together 10 drops of oil of geranium, 1 oz. of pure glycerine, 8 oz. of rose water, and 8 oz. of distilled water. Rub the mixture into the hands before they are quite dry.

* * * *

OUR PUZZLE PARAGRAPH.

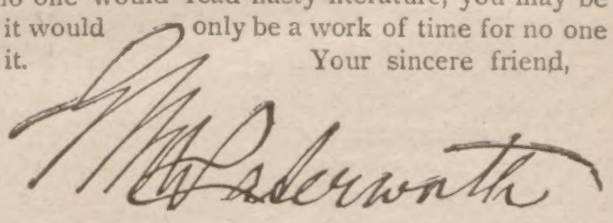
Mrs. Miller wants a sewing machine very badly. At the present moment she has only £1 to spare. What should she do?

A book valued at half-a-crown will be sent to the writer of the best answer, which must be marked on the outside, "Puzzle Paragraph," and reach the Editor, at 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C., not later than May 15th.

* * * *

Books again. "OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER" wants my opinion on the new-fashioned novel. I could write pages on the subject, and if I get many more letters I shall have to ask permission to put my opinions on a separate page. It is grievous, it is humiliating to all Christians—I use the word in its true, not party sense—to know that books which take for granted the immorality of men, and justify the immorality of women, should be scattered about our libraries. I look upon such books as "Old-fashioned Mother" mentions as a disgrace to our nineteenth century. If they give a true picture of the writer's every-day life, then all I can say is, I am very sorry for him; but we don't want all his loathsome experiences made public, any more than we should like a beggar with a ghastly-looking sore place to stand in the street with his wound exposed to move our pity. The only way to stop such books being published is to boycott them. In books, perhaps, more than anything else, the demand regulates the supply and if no one would read nasty literature, you may be assured it would only be a work of time for no one to write it.

Your sincere friend,



No Time to Serve God.—Said an acquaintance, not long since, "I used to read and rock and pray and do nothing but serve God; but I don't have time any more."

"Whom are you serving?" I inquired.

The reply was given somewhat snappishly, "Why, I'm just sweeping, baking, patching, and darning, and serving every one else except my Creator."

It set me thinking. Are we not commanded to do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do? Can we not combine work and prayer and make of every day's duties a loving service—"one grand, sweet song" of praise?

Then be it scrubbing a floor, making a batch of bread, nursing a child, or whatever work falls to our lot, let us do it heartily "as unto the Lord."

HINTS ON HOME DRESSMAKING

BY A PRACTICAL DRESSMAKER.

FASHIONABLE dress skirts have greatly increased in width, even moderate ones measuring about five and a half yards round the bottom. They are cut out of four widths of fifty-four inch material, and the straight edge of the side gore is joined to the sloped edge of the front. The centre of the back should be on the straight, there being no seam down the centre. If two edges on the cross be joined together, the skirt is liable to "drop," especially when made of a loose textured material. For cloth and heavy materials, tailor's canvas is used, while for thin dresses a lining not unlike wire-netting is sold, which is said to be extremely light and durable.

Fig. 16.

We showed last month a lady's dress and cape, and spoke of the practical use such garments can be put to. For school girls in their teens there can be no better fashion, as different blouses can be used when occasion requires. One skirt will generally outlast two bodies, as the elbows so soon get rubbed through on the school desks. The sacque jacket can be used instead of the cape, and made of the same material as the dress in a colour that will permit it being used with other dresses.

The material of the moment is alpaca, so far as we can judge. The newest make of this has somewhat the surface of a coarse canvas, but is very lustrous. For economical wear a coat or cape and skirt of alpaca may be most cordially recommended.

Fig. 17.

Fig. 16. This illustration shows a lady's dress very simple in design. It is after the order of the tailor-made gown, and has a circular basque set on separately. It can be made in a thin cheviot or alpaca. The body fastens invisibly with patent hooks and eyes. The edges of the bodice are all finished with a broad braid, a fancy braid trimming being set on beyond this, down the front of the body, neck-band, and sleeve. The skirt is arranged after the style we have described above.

Fig. 17. The dress shown under this number is suitable for a young lady in her teens, any light summer fabric or a washing material being employed. The skirt should be cut after the pattern supplied and will require lining, even if washing material is used, except in the case of drill or jean, which has substance enough in itself. All the fulness is at the back and sides. The body is made over a fitting lining, and the back is quite plain, while the front is arranged in the form of a full pouch-shaped bodice with a Zouave jacket over. This can be made of velvet or of the material covered with lace, and should be lined with silk. The neck-band is trimmed with ribbon, and has bows on each side. Full gigot sleeves, with cuff of lace or velvet.

Fig. 18.

Fig. 18. We have here the pattern of a girl's sailor dress so long in vogue, because so practical a garment for this season of the year. It can be carried out with equal effect in cotton or woollen goods. The skirt is mounted on a lining bodice which buttons at the back, and the plastron and neck-band are attached to this. The sailor jacket has a deep collar, and is set into a band of the material at the waist. The sleeves are fuller than were used last season. It will not require lining.

Fig. 19. Our readers will see by this illustration that the boys have entered into our consideration in this month's article. There are few boys' garments that can be made at home, excepting day and night-shirts, which should never be bought ready made. Patterns of these can be obtained in any size for 4½d., if our readers require them. The coat before us will answer for a light summer overcoat, or for a tennis jacket, when it will be cut single-breasted instead of double, as shown here. The fronts are faced with a piece of the cloth, and the edges are turned under and stitched, the seams being made neat by a strip of binding. If there is any difficulty with the pocket, an outside one, such as is put on to a sailor jacket, could be used instead of that with a flap, especially if a tennis or cricketing jacket is being made. For these loose jackets a fancy cord is used, which can be purchased in any colour at about one penny per yard.

Fig. 19.

Flat paper patterns can be supplied. Figs. 16, 17, 18, and 19, 6½d. each, post free. Address, "M.C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.